What is claimed is:

1. A central control system for broadband communications terminals, comprising:

a message source for generating control information adapted to provide different functionality to different broadband communications terminals; and

at least one transmitter adapted to transmit control information generated by said message source to said terminals on different control channels;

wherein:

said message source provides control channel configuration messages targeted to different terminals;

said control channel configuration messages designate a particular control channel from which the targeted terminal should thereafter acquire the control information required to control the functionality of the respective terminal; and

said transmitter provides the control information to the respective terminal on the designated control channel for use until the terminal is directed to another control channel by a new control channel configuration message.

2. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said control channel configuration messages designate a control channel frequency and a control channel packet identifier (PID).

3. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said control information includes at least one of configuration information, authorization information, updated code objects, and operational information.

4. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein a product test is performed on at least one particular terminal by providing said at least one terminal with a control channel configuration message designating a test channel

from which the particular at least one terminal should thereafter acquire control information.

5. A control system in accordance with claim 4, wherein said test channel is used to test features of the at least one terminal.

6. A control system in accordance with claim 4, wherein said test channel is used to test an application running on said at least one terminal.

7. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein a plurality of terminals are grouped by predetermined criteria, and each group is directed by a respective control channel configuration message to a different control channel for providing customized functionality for the terminals in the group.

8. A control system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said terminals receive services from subscription television systems, and said predetermined criteria comprise the particular system to which the terminals are subscribed.

9. A control system in accordance with claim 8, wherein said services comprise at least one of television services, Internet services or telephone services.

10. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein different terminals use different operating systems, and are directed by respective control channel configuration messages to different control channels depending on the particular operating system being run.

11. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein different terminals use different communication protocols, and are directed by respective control channel configuration messages to different control channels depending on the particular communication protocol used.

12. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein a population of newer terminals is directed by a respective control channel configuration message to a different control channel than a population of older terminals.

13. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein at least some of said control channels are out-of-band channels.

14. A control system in accordance with claim 13, wherein all of said control channels are out-of-band channels.

15. A control system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said message source comprises a wide-area access controller that communicates said control channel configuration messages to said terminals via local controllers.

16. A control system in accordance with claim 15, wherein:

said wide-area access controller comprises one of a cable television regional, national or international access system,

said local controllers comprise cable television headends, and

said terminals comprise cable television terminals..

17. A method for controlling a plurality of broadband communication terminals, comprising:

generating control information adapted to provide different functionality to different broadband communication terminals;

generating a plurality of control channel configuration messages targeted to different terminals; and

transmitting said control information to said terminals on different control channels;

wherein:

said control channel configuration messages designate a particular control channel from which the targeted terminal should thereafter acquire the control information required to control the functionality of the respective terminal; and

said transmitter provides the control information to the respective terminal on the designated control channel for use until the terminal is directed to another control channel by a new control channel configuration message.

18. A method in accordance with claim 17, further comprising:

performing a product test on at least one particular terminal by providing said at least one terminal with a control channel configuration message designating a test channel from which the particular at least one terminal should thereafter acquire control information.

19. A method in accordance with claim 18, wherein said test channel is used to test features of the at least one terminal.

20. A method in accordance with claim 18, wherein said test channel is used to test an application running on said at least one terminal.

21. A method in accordance with claim 17, further comprising:

grouping a plurality of terminals by predetermined criteria,

wherein each group is directed by a respective control channel configuration message to a different control channel for providing customized functionality for the terminals in the group.

22. A method in accordance with claim 21, wherein said terminals receive services from subscription television systems, and said predetermined criteria comprise the particular system to which the terminals are subscribed.

23. A method in accordance with claim 22, wherein said services comprise at least one of television services, Internet services or telephone services.

24. A broadband communications terminal comprising:

a tuner;

a processor for directing said tuner to a particular control channel in response to a control channel configuration message received from a remote service provider;

said processor being responsive to control information received via said particular control channel to control the functionality of said broadband communications terminal;

wherein:

said tuner remains tuned to said particular control channel for receipt of control information until directed to a different control channel by a new control channel configuration message; and

said processor uses the control information received via said particular control channel to control said functionality until control information is received from said different control channel for use by said processor.

25. A terminal in accordance with claim 24, wherein said control channel configuration messages designate a control channel frequency and a control channel packet identifier (PID) which are used by said processor to direct the tuner to a control channel.

26. A terminal in accordance with claim 24, wherein said control information includes at least one of configuration information, authorization information, updated code objects, and operational information.

27. A terminal in accordance with claim 24, wherein said terminal is a subscription television terminal.

28. A terminal in accordance with claim 24, wherein said terminal is adapted to receive and process at least one of television services, Internet services or telephone services.